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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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EXTERNAL - POLITICAL

1. Laos. Through selection of news items which it published the Soviet press gave the impression that the situation in Laos has become more tense. A constant theme was that "government" forces together with Pathet Lao units were having uninterrupted successes in the field and that, if this situation continues, the position of the Phoumi-Boun Oum "rebels" would collapse. However, in the last few days, the press has been printing news about renew SEATO activity regarding Laos and has reported several statements by western military leaders concerning their readiness to deal with any situation that might arise in connection with Laos. This leaves the impression that the US will not leave Laos alone and permit the Boun Oum government to be overwhelmed. The Soviet public has thus been left with a picture of growing tension over Laos. The only type of news which offsets this impression is the activity of Souvanna which is described as directed at obtaining a cease fire as soon as possible. The British communication to the Soviet Foreign Ministry of March 23 was not reported in the March 24 papers. The latest version of Washington's position on Laos carried by Soviet papers is that the US continues, as before, to oppose holding an international conference on Laos.

2. Nuclear Test Suspension Talks. There was no build-up whatsoever in the Soviet press prior to the reopening of the nuclear tests suspension negotiations in Geneva. After the meetings had been resumed the papers took the position that the Americans claim that they have a new position which includes a number of concessions. Soviet articles commented that the concessions were insignificant and that the US had only retreated from positions it could no longer maintain. The press did not, however, report what the new US position was and used as a pretext for this press treatment, the claim that Soviet correspondents had not been admitted to a press conference given by the US Delegation. The papers reported the Soviet proposal for changing the executive structure of the control organization along lines similar to their proposals for UN reorganization in a way which scarcely concealed the unacceptability of this proposal to the US and the UK.

3. Abolition of Censorship of Foreign Correspondents. The requirement that foreign correspondents in the USSR file their despatches only after approval of Soviet censors was lifted on March 23, thus ending this particular form of censorship. In making the announcement the Foreign Ministry official did not mention the word censorship and nothing concerning this development appeared in the March 24 Moscow papers. This development does not of course affect Soviet internal barriers to the flow of news.

4. Africa. The volume of attention devoted to the Congo remained at a fairly low level throughout the week. The decisions of the Tananarive Conference were subjected to sharp criticism as being essentially Belgian-motivated and designed to split up the Republic. Pravda on March 20 described the conference result as a "doubtful victory for colonialism" and stressed that even the Western press admits that Gizenga's decisions regarding the Congo will determine whether the Tananarive Conference will be of any significance. The declaration of the Government of Ghana which contended

that Kasavubu is no longer legal head of state as a result of the Tananarive decisions was noted in the Soviet press and picked up in a subsequent Pravda editorial. Red Star reported an interview by the Bulgarian press agency with the Gizenga official Mulele in which Mulele was cited as declaring that the "legal government" is in urgent need of medical supplies and complains that some recently independent African states were withholding full support from the "legal government." As the reporting week ended, the UNGA debate on Congo dominated Congo coverage. Gromyko's speech was described at detail in all Soviet papers, while Ambassador Stevenson's response received only very brief coverage.

Assistant Secretary Williams' trip was criticized in a number of articles in the Soviet press. Pravda declared that Williams' visit, in spite of his denials to the contrary, was admittedly designed to combat "communist infiltration" of Africa. Sovetskaya Rossiya denounced the trip as an effort to protect the interests of US monopolies in Africa--monopolies which extract over $400 million annually from Africa.

A Soviet-Mali agreement on economic and cultural cooperation was concluded March 18 (see Economic Weeka). In the published speeches on the occasion, Mali delegation chief Keita praised the Soviet record on anti-colonialism and referred in glowing terms to the "freedom of religion" he encountered in his travels in the Muslim area of Central Asia. On balance, however, his speech was reasonably restrained.

5. Warsaw Pact Meeting. All Soviet papers reported that a meeting of the Warsaw Pact members will open in Moscow March 28, which will be attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense as well as the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

6. Visits.

Laos. All Soviet papers reported that Prince Souvanna Phouma plans to visit Moscow in the course of his present trip.

Mali. Madeira Keita, Mali Minister of Interior who has been touring in the USSR, signed a trade agreement on March 18 in Moscow and returned home.

Somali. Yusfaa Osmana Samantor, described as the Secretary General of the League for a Greater Somali, was received by Presidium Member Mukhtdinov on March 16.

Burma. Several papers reported General Ne Win will visit Moscow late in March.

Ceylon. The Minister of Finance Felix Dias-Bandaranaike arrived in Moscow on March 22. At the same time Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pushkin, was reported to have arrived in Colombo.

Hungary. The Hungarian Deputy Premier Apro arrived in Moscow and, according to the press, was received by Kosygin on March 21.

Outer Mongolia. A Soviet delegation headed by Marshal Malinovsky returned from a visit in Ulan Bator where they attended the anniversary celebration of the Mongolian Army.

INTERNAL

7. Leadership. Stopping en route from Akmolinsk to visit a state farm and speak before its "collective," Khrushchev arrived in Alma Ata March 17. There he continued discussions on Kazakh and Tselinnyy Kray construction problems which he had initiated the previous week by summoning the president of the Academy of Construction and Architecture and other pertinent officials to his side in Akmolinsk. He also paid a well publicized visit to the Kazakh Academy of Sciences before participating in a Kazakh agricultural conference March 20-21. His speech before this assembly March 21 (broadcast but not yet published) was followed by his receiving from the hands of Kazakh First Secretary D. A. Kunayev a special medal "for the emancipation of virgin and long-fallow lands." The speech itself, praising the virgin lands effort at great length and calling in effect for a crusade to build Communism there, alone would have merited the award. This was equally true for his March 14 speech in Akmolinsk, (since changed to "Tselinograd" in rapid response to Khrushchev's suggestion to that effect), in which he charged the renegades of the anti-Party group with having opposed the Central Committee's (his) decision to develop the virgin lands, a charge to which attention was drawn by Pravda's lead editorial March 20.

Khrushchev's activities since the end of the Alma Ata conference have not been publicized. Almost all of the other Moscow resident members and candidate members of the Party Presidium have been accounted for during the week in normal pursuits. The only group appearance was by L. I. Brezhnev, N. G. Ignatov, A. I. Mikoyan, N.A.Mukhitdinov and D. S. Polanskiy at the signing of the USSR-Mali economic, trade and cultural cooperation accords in the Kremlin March 18.

8. Pospelov Heads Institute of Marxism-Leninism. An earlier rumor that CPSU Central Committee Presidium Candidate Member P.N.Pospelov had become director of the Party's Institute of Marxism-Leninism was confirmed by his identification in that position in March 18 press reports of a joint meeting of the Institute, the Academy of Social Sciences, and the Higher Party School. By this move, Pospelov returns to a post he held prior to advancing to Central Committee secretary in 1953 and, subsequently, to membership in the Central Committee's Bureau for the RSFSR and to the Presidium as a candidate member. His becoming head of the Institute is inconsistent with the professed reason for his release from the Secretariat last May, to concentrade on his work in the RSFSR Bureau, and suggests that he, like former RSFSR Bureau deputy chairman A.V.Aristov, has now been dropped from that body. His apparent loss within a year of two Party positions, each more important than directorship of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, may mean that he is being "eased out" of the top leadership group. However, he is still being identified as a

Presidium candidate member, and the Institute may be playing an important role in the working up of the new basic Party programme which is to be adopted by the 22nd Party Congress in October.

9. Azerbaydzhan Minister of Agriculture Replaced. The March 16 replacement of Azerbaydzhan Minister of Agriculture M.M.Poladov by A.M.Kuliyev (Bakinskiy Rabochiy of March 17) is the sixth such agricultural minister change noted since V.V.Matskevich was replaced by M.A.Ol'shanskiy as USSR Minister of Agriculture December 29, 1960, and is the third this month. (Turkmenistan, RSFSR, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia and, now, Azerbaydzhan.) Current or pending sessions of supreme soviets in a number of the union republics may be the occasion for similar action elsewhere as part of the current reorganization of agricultural management and organizations which had been sparked by the generally poor performance in 1960.

10. New State Committee for Electronics Technology. A net addition to the USSR Council of Ministers may have been made by the formation, announced March 18, of the State Committee for Electronics Technology of the Council of Ministers. There has been no mention of abolishing the Committee for Radio Electronics. The first deputy chairman of the latter Committee, A. I. Shokin, has been named a minister and chairman of the new state committee.

MILITARY - ARMY

11. [redacted] BS

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